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ABSTRACT

This paper provides an overview of Helping One Student To Succeed (HOSTS), a language arts program that uses one-on-one mentoring to help low-achieving students improve reading and problem-solving skills. Goals of the program include improving academic achievement in reading; building student problem-solving skills; and improving student behavior, attitudes, and self-esteem. Program components include: (1) mentoring (a HOSTS student meets with a mentor 30 minutes per day at least 4 days a week); (2) professional development (extensive teacher training and access to a variety of implementation resources, to maximize the mentoring relationship); and (3) individual lesson plans (developed by a HOSTS-trained teacher using a HOSTS-designed database, and designed to address the student's developmental levels, learning styles, and the specific learning objectives to be achieved). In 2000, the program operated in 1,100 schools in 41 states, the District of Columbia, and El Salvador. Sections of the paper discuss background, philosophy and goals, program components, evidence of effectiveness, professional development and support, implementation, costs, considerations, contact information, and policy issues and questions. (SR)

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HOSTS - Helping One Student to Succeed

**Background - Philosophy and Goals - Program Components - Evidence of Effectiveness
Professional Development and Support - Implementation - Costs - Considerations
Policy Issues and Questions - Resources**

Topic or Category: Reading or Mentoring
Grade Level: K-12
Target Population: General, At-Risk

OVERVIEW

Background and Scope:

HOSTS (*Help One Student to Succeed*) is a language arts program that uses one-on-one mentoring to help low-achieving students improve reading and problem-solving skills. Begun in 1971 in Vancouver, Washington, HOSTS has served over one million students and involved over 500,000 mentors. The program now operates in 1,100 schools in 41 states, the District of Columbia and El Salvador.

Philosophy and Goals:

The goals of the HOSTS program include:
Improving academic achievement in reading
Building student problem solving skills
Improving student behavior, attitudes and self-esteem (Holden, 1998).

Program Components:

Mentoring: HOSTS is an extension of the regular classroom. It uses individual mentoring to improve students' reading, vocabulary, writing and other comprehensive learning skills. Children entering the program are usually reading one or more grade levels below their peers or having difficulties mastering various aspects of the English language. A HOSTS student meets with a mentor 30 minutes per day at least four days a week to address these issues and to work on different behavioral skills.

Professional Development: In order to maximize the mentoring relationship, the HOSTS program provides extensive teacher training and access to a variety of additional implementation resources.

Individual Lesson Plans: Using a HOSTS-developed computer database, a HOSTS-trained teacher develops individualized lesson plans designed to address the student's developmental levels, learning styles and the specific learning objectives to be achieved by the mentor. The mentor then guides the student through the lessons, provides encouragement and records the student's progress for the teacher.

Evidence of Effectiveness:

Evaluations of HOSTS include the following:

1. An evaluation of 1995-96 data and a follow-up evaluation of 1996-97 data examined over 7,000 students at 136 schools in Delaware, Michigan and Texas. Results were reported for students in grades 2 through 4. The data was collected from the annual HOSTS National Exemplary School applications provided by HOSTS schools. The applications provided quantitative and qualitative data on (1) changes in student performance in reading, (2) program exit percentages and (3) attitude toward reading and self-esteem. Results include:

The overall reading gain for this group was 2.0 grade levels, which is double the expected gain for the instructional time spent in the HOSTS program.
Of the programs that require exit data, more than 51% of the students met the minimum exit criteria of reading at or above grade level.
All three states showed a substantial increase in student performance in reading and improved student self-esteem at all grade levels, in all districts and in all three states. Gains were documented using results from an Informal Reading Inventory, a standardized reading or language arts test, state or local assessment, attainment in Reading Objectives Inventory, regular language arts grades or other measurements of academic achievement in Language Arts (Holden, 1998).
Note: This study did not include control or comparison groups.

2. Pasadena Independent School District in Texas performed an evaluation in 1994-95 that examined students participating in HOSTS reading programs in 17 schools. Students selected for the HOSTS program were in grades 1 through 5 and were reading below grade level at the beginning of the 1994-95 school year. Results include:
Students had gains ranging from 1.4 grade levels to 3.1 grade levels at the end of the 1994-95 school year.
Ninety-one percent of HOSTS students passed their regular classes (Gallegos, 1995).
Note: This study did not include control or comparison groups.

3. The *School Profiles of HOSTS National Exemplary Programs (1997-1998)* indicates varying degrees of reading gains for students participating in HOSTS programs in California, Delaware, Michigan, Nebraska, North Carolina, Texas, Washington and Wisconsin. Cathedral City Elementary School in Cathedral City, California was the only school in this group indicating a HOSTS student comparison with school wide gains. Results of the comparison at Cathedral showed HOSTS students' average NCE (normal curve equivalents) gain was 1.82 compared with a school-wide gain of .37. All schools in the *Profiles* also reported improvement in the following areas:
Decrease in discipline referrals (HOSTS student rate was lower than school-wide rates for many sites)
Improved attendance
Improved self-esteem
Improved attitude toward reading and school in general (HOSTS Corporation, 1998).

5. An evaluation conducted in Portland, Oregon investigated the effects of the HOSTS program, comparing the achievement gains of Chapter I students who were in the HOSTS program with (1) Chapter I students in the district and (2) all district students. Reading gains of HOSTS students, though greater than the gains for all student groups at the same grade levels district-wide, were statistically insignificant (Leitner & Ingebo, 1984).

Professional Development and Support:

HOSTS offers three days of training for the teacher coordinator and/or teachers participating in the program. This initial training is followed by two on-site implementation and technical assistance visits during the school year. These training efforts are accompanied by a collection of resources supplied by HOSTS including access to a nation-wide computer database, books, games, classroom exercises and instructional strategies designed to assist the teachers in creating their lesson plans. An unlimited help line and newsletter are also available to help teachers and administrators implement the program. Finally, an annual three-day conference and regional workshop provide various networking and staff development opportunities (NWREL, 1998).

HOSTS Corporation has a staff of 25 full-time trainers available to help a school and its teachers implement this program (NWREL, 1998). Based on the program selected by the school (determined by cost considerations), as well as a school's approach to professional development, the trainers provide an implementation format specifically tailored to that school.

Implementation:

HOSTS programs are implemented by teacher coordinators and/or individual teachers selected by a

school district. Implementation components include:
Assessing student needs
Organizing HOSTS materials
Providing initial and on-going training for mentors
Coordinating the mentor/student materials
Assessing and monitoring changes in student performance
Scheduling all mentoring sessions (Holden, 1998).

HOSTS teachers and staff then recruit community volunteers, student peers and others who provide the one-on-one mentoring with students.

As part of the implementation process, HOSTS provides each school with a Success Indicator Instrument to assess its progress towards specific objectives. This qualitative measure rates levels of implementation in the following areas:
Diagnostic assessment
Individualized lessons
Mentoring
Prescriptive strategies
Program evaluation
Administrative support and communication (Holden, 1998).

Costs:

HOSTS is based on a fee for each instructional program. The initial licensing fee for the language arts program is approximately $32,900 for year one, $9,900 for year two and $6,600 for year three. There is also a Readiness program for PreK-3 students available for a cost of $18,500. These fees cover training, instructional materials and software licensing.

While new staff is not required to implement a HOSTS program, participating teachers may need schedules and compensation readjusted to allow for new duties. Likewise, substitutes for teachers who are released for training or recruiting and funding for computer access may be necessary.

Considerations:

The success of HOSTS requires a substantial commitment from the mentors, and schools must be willing to establish a long-term commitment to recruit and train those mentors. Also, teachers must have access to computers to successfully implement HOSTS.

An additional consideration concerns the evidence of effectiveness available for HOSTS. The studies summarized above did not use control or comparison groups in their methodology, except for the 1984 study in Portland, OR. Also, individual reading gains for HOSTS students offered in the *Profiles* was only compared with school or district-wide for one school.

Policy Issues and Questions:

1. How can states help districts and schools choose the most appropriate programs to improve students' skills and performance? What information and assistance would be useful?
2. Should states promote particular programs for districts and schools to use?
3. How can policymakers check and validate a program's track record before they encourage districts to implement the program?
4. What criteria should states and districts use to invest in various programs initially and for the long-term?
5. How should policymakers weigh benefits of a program versus its costs and required resources? Can a balance be struck between effectiveness and efficiency?
6. How can a state encourage public participation/community interaction in schools and individual programs?
7. What state policies can help improve teacher training and professional development so teachers are

better equipped to help students learn more effectively?

Resources:

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